

Testimony of Dr. Margaret Generali.
Connecticut School Counselor Association
in regard to

H.B. No. 5037- AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023.

Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education

Public Hearing - February 17, 2022

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and respected members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Margaret Generali. I am a Professor and Counselor Educator at Southern Connecticut State University. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding HB5037- An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023. Specifically, I would like to emphasize the importance of school counselors and the need to fund additional school counselors so that every student has access to a school counselor.

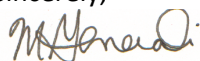
Although schools have the primary task of educating our young people, this cannot be accomplished without supporting their physical, social and emotional needs concurrently. For some children, these supports are provided within the classroom in the way of primary prevention or skill building. For others, supports may include interventions that help them navigate the more challenging aspects of life. Many children have come to depend on schools for these supports. Mental health concerns among youth have only grown since the onset of COVID-19. The COVID 19 pandemic has contributed to financial hardship, health concerns and loss for children and their families. This has exacerbated mental health issues for our P-12 students and increased the urgency for school-based support services (Branje & Sheffield Morris, 2021). As a counselor educator, I supervise counselors in training placed within public schools throughout Connecticut. It is evident that school personnel are struggling to meet the social emotional needs of students. This pattern exists across school levels and throughout all school demographics.

School counselors are counseling professionals with the knowledge, skills and experience to provide social and emotional supports in the unique school environment. They are trained to provide primary prevention in the classroom and responsive intervention within and outside the classroom setting. School counselors are trained to collaborate with all school professionals and parents to meet the academic, career and social and emotional needs of children in the P-12 schools. School counselors are also able to manage crisis response and determine when more students need the next level of care. Unfortunately, not all schools have school counselors. Therefore, not all children can benefit from these supports. Connecticut schools need a full-time school counselor in every school. As well, not all school counselors have manageable caseloads of students. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2019) recommends that a school counselor be assigned to a caseload of 250 student or less. Larger caseloads create further barriers to supporting student needs.

As a past school counselor and a parent of a P-12 student in Connecticut, I know the importance of school counseling services. Every child deserves the support of a school counselor beginning early in their school career. In summation, I would ask that the appropriations committee consider appropriating money specifically for school counseling and the hiring of more school counselors. Our school-aged children need the support more than ever.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Margaret M. Generali, Ph.D.
Professor, School Counseling Program
Chairperson, Department of Counseling and School Psychology